

In order to return an indictment and bring these terrorists to American justice, it became essential that FBI agents be permitted to interview several of the participating Hezbollah terrorists who were detained in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the interviews was to confirm—with usable, co-conspirator testimonial evidence—the Iranian complicity that Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan and the Mabaheth had already relayed to us. (For the record, the FBI's investigation only succeeded because of the real cooperation provided by Prince Bandar and our colleagues in the Mabaheth.) FBI agents had never before been permitted to interview first-hand Saudis detained in the kingdom.

Unfortunately, the White House was unable or unwilling to help the FBI gain access to these critical witnesses. The only direction from the Clinton administration regarding Iran was to order the FBI to stop photographing and fingerprinting official Iranian delegations entering the U.S. because it was adversely impacting our "relationship" with Tehran. We had argued that the MOIS was using these groups to infiltrate its agents into the U.S.

After months of inaction, I finally turned to the former President Bush, who immediately interceded with Crown Prince Abdullah on the FBI's behalf. Mr. Bush personally asked the Saudis to let the FBI do one-on-one interviews of the detained Khobar bombers. The Saudis immediately acceded. After Mr. Bush's Saturday meeting with the Crown Prince in Washington, Ambassador Wyche Fowler, Dale Watson, the FBI's excellent counterterrorism chief, and I were summoned to a Monday meeting where the crown prince directed that the FBI be given direct access to the Saudi detainees. This was the investigative breakthrough for which we had been waiting for several years.

Mr. Bush typically disclaimed any credit for his critical intervention but he earned the gratitude of many FBI agents and the Khobar families. I quickly dispatched the FBI case agents back to Saudi Arabia, where they interviewed, one-on-one, six of the Hezbollah members who actually carried out the attack. All of them directly implicated the IRGC, MOIS and senior Iranian government officials in the planning and execution of this attack. Armed with this evidence, the FBI recommended a criminal indictment that would identify Iran as the sponsor of the Khobar bombing. Finding a problem for every solution, the Clinton administration refused to support a prosecution.

The prosecution and criminal indictment for these murders had to wait for a new administration. In February 2001, working with exactly the same evidence but with a talented new prosecutor, James B. Comey Jr. (now U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York), Attorney General John Ashcroft's personal intervention, and White House support, the case was presented to a grand jury. On June 21, 2001, only four days before some of the terrorist charges would have become barred by the five-year statute of limitations, the grand jury indicted 13

Hezbollah terrorists for the Khobar attack and identified Iran as the sponsor.

Nonetheless, the terrorists who murdered 19 U.S. airmen and wounded hundreds more have yet to be brought to American justice. Whenever U.S. diplomats hold talks with representatives of Iran's Islamic government, Khobar Towers should be the top item on their agenda. The arrest and turnover to U.S. authorities of Ahman Ibrahim Al-Mughassil and Ali Saed bin Ali Al-Houri, two of the indicted Hezbollah leaders of the Khobar attack believed to be in Iran, should be part of any "normalization" discussion. Furthermore, access and accountability by IRGC, MOIS and other senior Iranian government leaders for their complicity in the attack should be nonnegotiable.

Before his appointment as the top U.S. administrator in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer chaired the National Commission on Terrorism, which studied the Khobar attack. The commission concluded that "Iran remains the most active state supporter of terrorism. . . . The IRBC and MOIS have continued to be involved in the planning and execution of terrorist acts. They also provide funding, training, weapons, logistical resources, and guidance to a variety of terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, Hamas, PIJ, and PFLP-GC." The commission noted that "in October 1999, President Clinton officially requested cooperation [a letter delivered through a third-party government] from Iran in the investigation [of the Khobar bombing]. Thus far, Iran has not responded. International pressure in the Pan Am 103 case ultimately succeeded in getting some degree of cooperation from Libya. The United States government has not sought similar multilateral action to bring pressure on Iran to cooperate in the Khobar Towers bombing investigation."

One of my last official acts as FBI director was to attend a memorial service at Arlington National Cemetery with the 19 stoic Air Force families with whom I had become very close. They all came to my office to thank the FBI for keeping faith with them and presented me with a signed plaque. It will always be for me the most cherished honor of my public service.

Yesterday the White House reiterated Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recent statement that al Qaeda leaders are now conducting their operations from Iran. The time to bring that pressure to bear is right now, with Ambassador Bremer and our armed forces bringing democracy and justice to the Iraqi people next door. This time the United States should not just send Tehran a letter. American justice for our 19 Khobar heroes is long overdue.

PEACE IN SRI LANKA

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2003

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise on the House floor this evening to express my con-

cerns about the pause in peace negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers. I would also like to reiterate my full support for peace talks between both sides to resume.

Mr. Speaker, Sri Lanka is a country that has suffered the tremendous loss of nearly 65,000 lives due to a longstanding internal conflict between Sri Lankans and the LTTE. On February 22, 2002, a groundbreaking ceasefire agreement was brokered by the Norwegian government and signed by both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. At that time, we all wished for a successful peace process and both sides were committed to working towards the end goal of peace.

Although the agreement was fairly structured, a peace process can only proceed when all parties act on good faith and adhere to the agreed ceasefire accord. Unfortunately, the LTTE has recently withdrawn from the peace process and is boycotting the continued peace talks to be held in June in Japan at the Tokyo Donor Conference.

Mr. Speaker, the LTTE has said they will not participate in the Tokyo Donor Conference in protest over their exclusion from the preliminary conference held in Washington in April. The U.S. State Department did not invite the LTTE to the preliminary conference in Washington due to the fact that they remain on the State Department list of terrorist organizations.

Mr. Speaker, both sides claim violations of the ceasefire agreement. According to Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), many violations have been made by the LTTE since the cease-fire agreement. For example, the LTTE is still recruiting child soldiers, the LTTE has attacked the Sri Lankan Navy and a Chinese trawler, and the LTTE actively attempts to import arms, which have subsequently been intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy.

The LTTE rebels also criticized the Sri Lankan military for its continued occupation of Tamil homes, schools, places of worship and other public buildings in violation of the ceasefire agreement.

I feel strongly that if the LTTE returns to the peace talks and participates in the Tokyo Donor Conference, a peaceful resolution between both sides can be worked out. The United States and countries around the world are concerned and would like to see the long process of building peace in Sri Lanka continue on a timely basis.

Mr. Speaker, the signed ceasefire offers a window of opportunity for peace in Sri Lanka and I encourage the LTTE to recognize and utilize this unique opportunity for working towards peace and stability.